JOIN US ON THE ROAD TO

SOUTH FURLANDS

ISSUE 5

AUS: $3.50 NZ: $4.50 O.S: $6.00

Down Under Caterwaulings

Issue 5

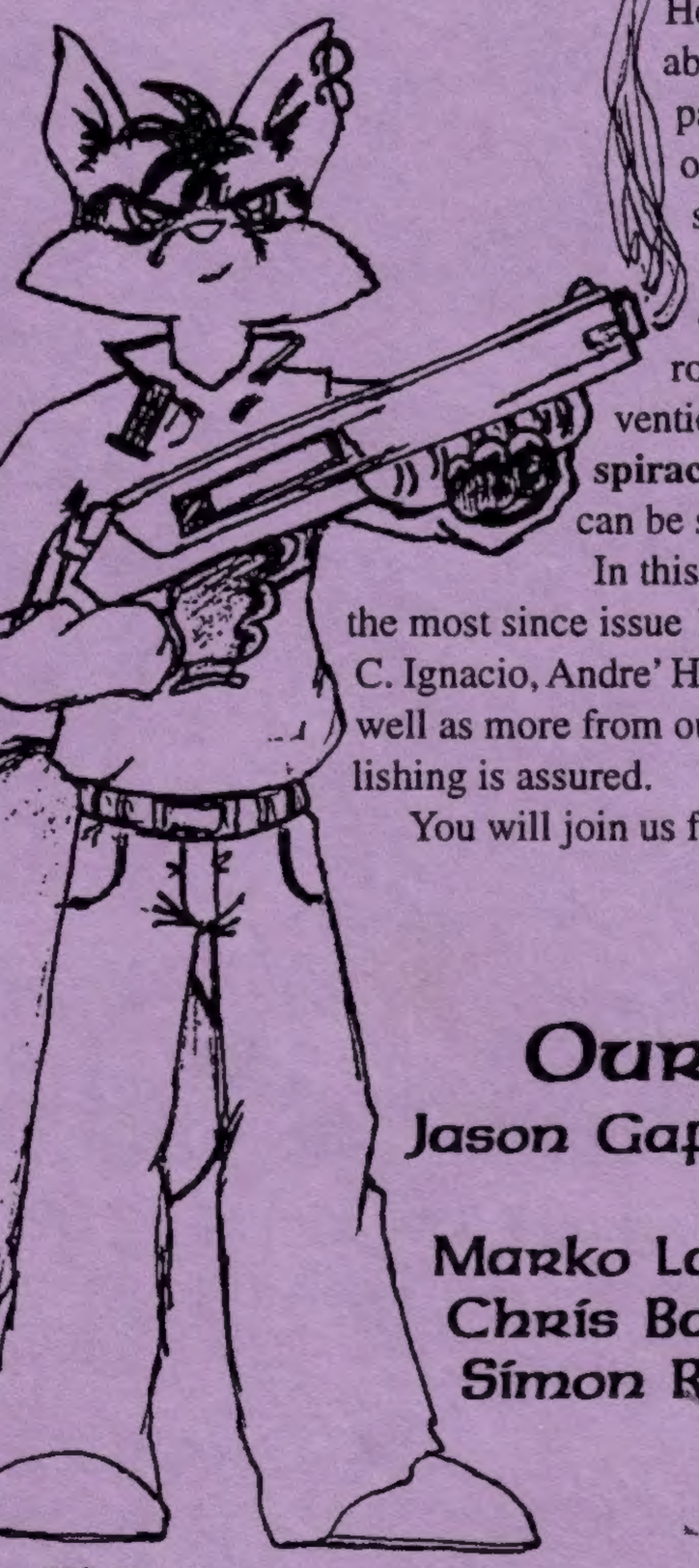
August 1996

Editorial

Issue 5 marks a year of furry publishing in Australia with *South Fur Lands*. Although there were Australian minicomics with a furry flavour published before us (**Hairbutt the Hippo**, **Flash Domingo**), we were the first (and still the only) fanzine published specifically for furry fans. A year is an important milestone, not only because it's a convenient marking point but that's also when we wait with bated breath for more money to come in.

What's happened among the Australian/New Zealand furry community during that time? The OzFurry mailing list, started by Chris Baird in Newcastle in April 1995, has grown from five founding members (all of whom, except for Myzer, now live under the one roof called **Quarantine** and work on the fanzine) to 35 members, including five from overseas.

Jason's continued his yearly pilgrimage to **OzCon**, each time taking more furries with him. This year, for the first time, a furry fanzine was jostling for space among all the other minicomics. Australia has a thriving small press community (Don't use the "I" word around Gerard.) which gave us a warm and enthusiastic welcome. It was Gerard Ashworth who established our place in it by calling us "skunk fuckers" during a crowded panel on small press. (This is a term he's fond of using to describe himself, more for shock value than anything else.) He then topped it off with an impassioned monologue about mini comic publishing during the following panel with Dave Sim and Eddie Campbell. The rest of the audience may not have understood what that strange hairy man was raving about, but we did.



Best of all, New Zealand furries are working on introducing a furry panel and even a furry video room to **Conspiracy**, their local science fiction convention. They also hope to convert the conveners of **Conspiracy** to furrydom, one by one. (Thanks, Snorty!) You can be sure that *SFL* will be down there in force.

In this issue we're happy to introduce five new creators; the most since issue 1! With new work from Will A. Sanborn, Rommel C. Ignacio, Andre' Heinonen, Grant Preston and Antony Eerdhuyzen as well as more from our favourite regulars, our future in Australian publishing is assured.

You will join us for the ride, won't you?

Marko Laine
Text Editor

Our Valued Staff...

Jason Gaffney ..... Publisher/ Editor-in-Chief
Marko Laine ..... Text Editor/dtp
Chris Baird ..... Scanning
Simon Raboczi... Design Philosophy/ Fiddly Bits

Submission Deadlines

A general rule for submission deadlines is that they fall on the last day of every third month. Each issue will be released about a month later. (Honest!)

Issue 6 ..... 30th September 1996
Issue 7 ..... 30th November 1996

South Fur Lands

Issue 5

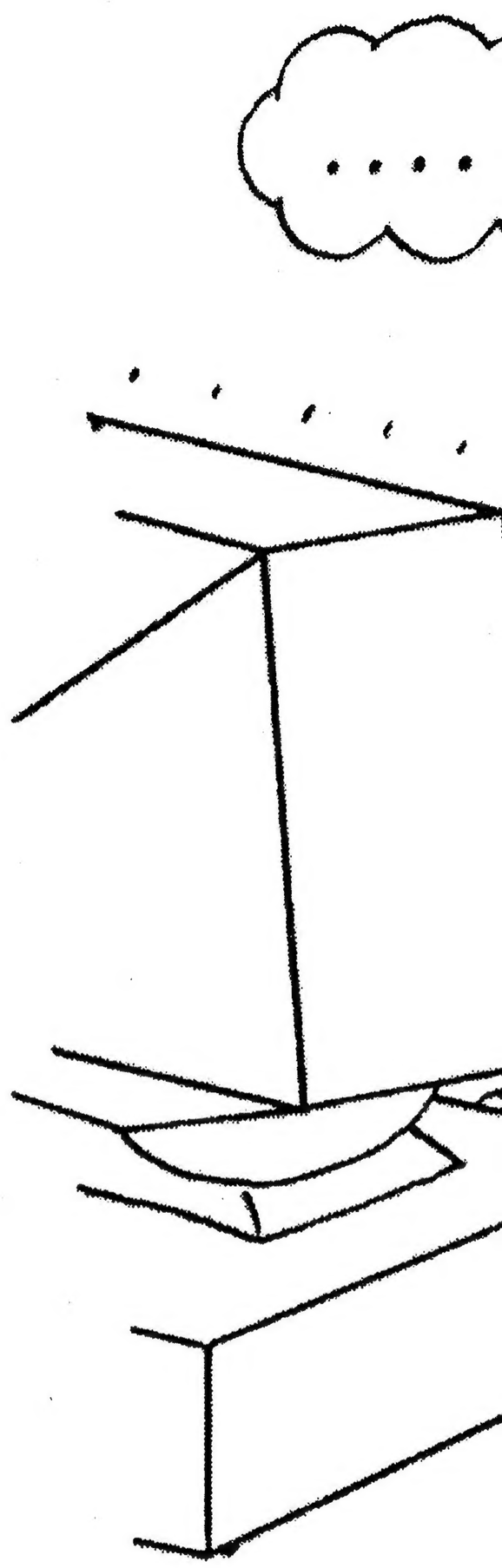
August 1996

Contents

Road to *South Fur Lands*	*Skye Ogden*	***Cover***
Got the Shotgun Blues	*Travis Sampson*	***Inside Cover***
Another Report	*Grant Preston*	***2***
Foreplay	*Grant Preston*	***3***
Photo Opportunity	*Andre' Heinonen*	***4***
Running Late	*Andre' Heinonen*	***5***
Always a Fanboy	*Craig Hilton*	***6***
Doing Unto Others	*Terry Knight*	***7***
Crowded Bar Scene	*Amy Pronovost*	***8***
Rat-on-a-Rope	*Amy Pronovost*	***9***
Chesty Bonds	*Jason Gaffney*	***10***
That Good Old Megafuture	*Gerard Ashworth*	***11***
First Contact	*Will A. Sanborn & Bernard Doove*	***12***
Down on the Farm	*Jason Gaffney*	***20***
Tanisha Kalealea	*Rommel C. Ignacio*	***21***
Tom Wolfe	*Alison Gallienne*	***22***
Wild Roses	*Alison Gallienne*	***23***
Mirrorshades	*Grant Freckelton*	***24***
Kreggan	*Grant Freckelton*	***25***
The Emu and the Dingo	*Antony Eerdhuyzen*	***26***
Digitigrade	*Gerard Ashworth*	***27***
Orynx with Sword	*Amy Pronovost*	***28***
Badger and Dragon	*Amy Pronovost*	***29***
Venisaan Power Armour	*David Buttenshaw*	***30***
Fingal Street Timbawolves	*David Buttenshaw*	***31***
The Goat-Foot Art God	*Craig Hilton*	***32***
Boon	*Craig Hilton*	***Back Cover***

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PRINTED IN AUSTRALIA



ANOTHER REPORT **Grant Preston**

I did this cartoon for my former boss when she left our department to move up in the company. I figured that upper management spent a lot of time writing reports, so… Just nobody tell her that the character is a skunk! 8-{)



"YET ANOTHER REPORT"

gp

FOREPLAY **Grant Preston**

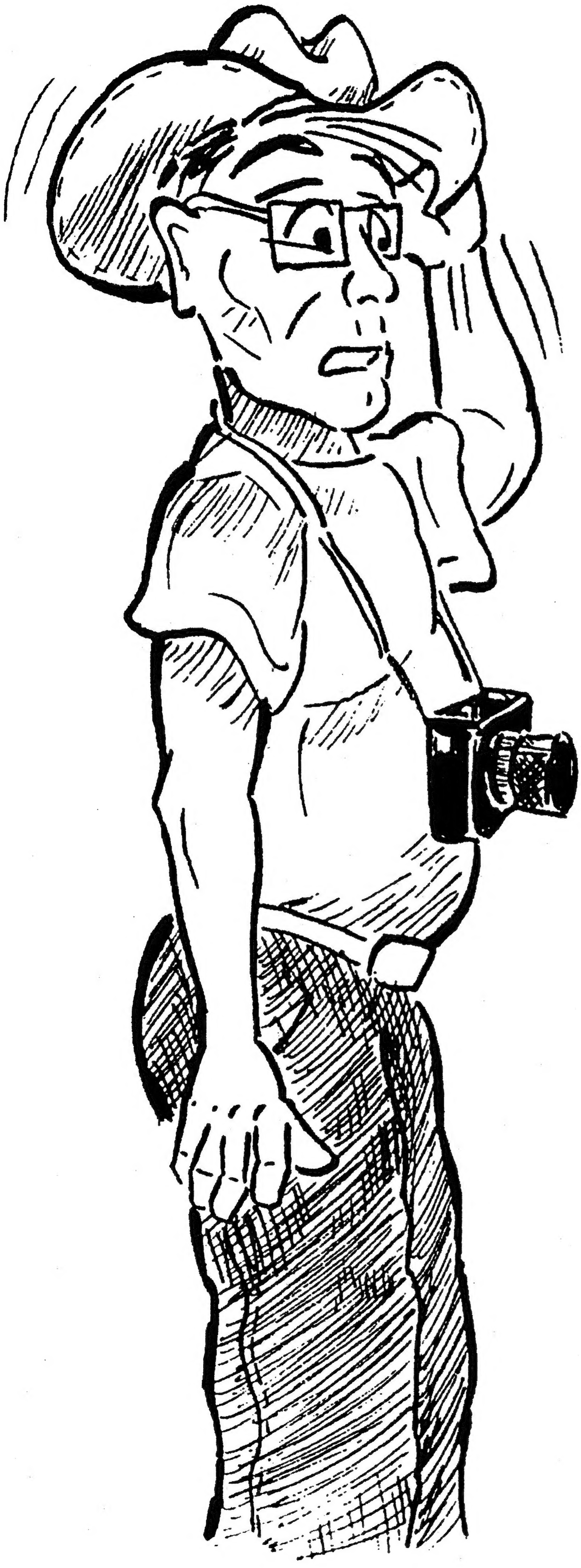
This picture came about from wondering what Furries would do differently from Humans when it came to their partners. Having one's fur combed or brushed would probably be a very pleasant experience, sort of like a massage is for Humans. It also came from realising that I've drawn very few male furries. The female form seems to be easier to draw. Funny, that...



"FO



REPLAY"





Andre' Heinonen

What if the 'roo in the zoo had a camera...? "A little to the left, one step back, yeah that's good mate! Now stand still and smile!" Typical roles-reversed humour. (Also I get to draw an actual human, which is pretty much a first for me.)





Andre' Heinonen

Hello, I'm Andre' Heinonen. I live in Sweden, which is probably as exotic a place to you, as Australia is to me. What prompted me to do these two drawings was a fan mail regarding my internet art from your local talent, Amy Pronovost (Hi Amy!) and really, who can resist such a nice lady even if he wanted to? :) So, I'm here. But, since I don't normally draw terribly much Aussie wildlife, this will most probably be a one-shot. Wanna see more? I **am** available for commissions... There are always my net scans though, and I can be reached at `e92_anh@e.kth.se`. In any case, I'm always happy to get mail.

Ah yes, the poor guy is too much the human; always busy and on the run! Actually this drawing began with him shying away from something on the ground, but I found that adding a watch on his left wrist, a suitcase and a tie, made the drawing much more fun—and perhaps more topical. :)

9/3 ~96

Always a Fanboy

by Craig Hilton

The fanboy in question is the unspeakable generic article. The song is dedicated to Steve Gallacci, Jim Groat, Stan Sakai, Donna Barr and Terrie Smith. Staunch fellows all.

To the tune of "She's Always a Woman" by Billy Joel

He can shake the whole floor as he waddles along.
He can clear the whole room with his bodily pong.
And he'll talk and he'll talk 'til you beg him to leave.
He's a pretty nice guy, but he's always a fanboy to Steve.

He's a fully grown man with a teenage libido.
He'll insist he should write the whole script for Albedo.
And he'll bring out his sketchbook and dare you to heave.
Well he's okay I guess, but he's always a fanboy to Steve.

Ah, Erma Felna's his love. She's the slave of his dreams. She's the light of his life.
Ah, in stilettos and gloves. With a crowbar and cream. Heck then who needs a wife?

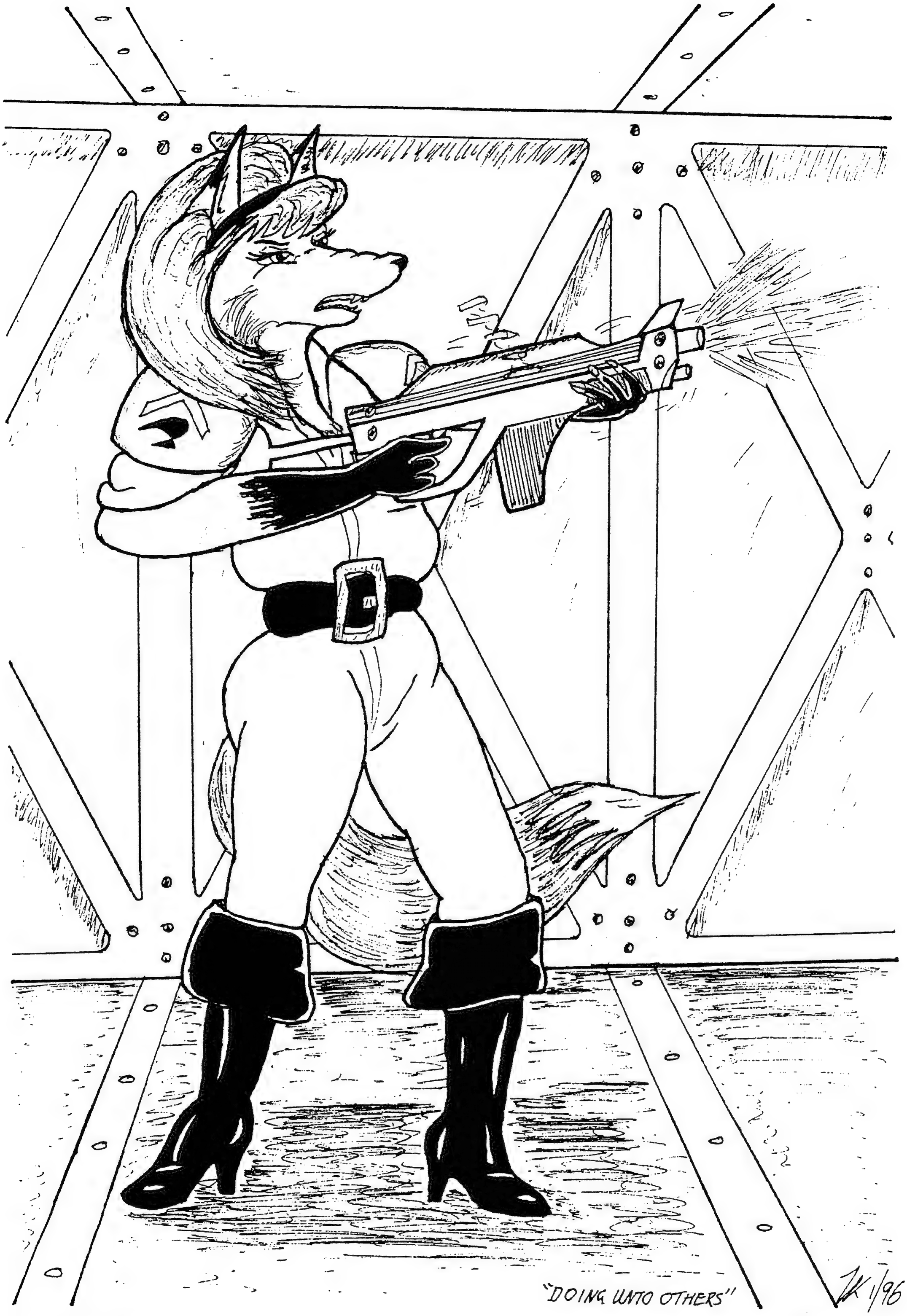
You can call him a slob but you'll never offend him.
Fire a .45 magnum—you won't even bend him.
But try arguing Japanimation with him,
And you'll wish you were dead, 'cause the guy's a real fanboy to Jim.

Ah, it's Red Shetland he loves. He admires her like hell. He adores her to bits.
Ah, and he treasures great art. And he measures great art by the size of the tits.

Then he'll give you a lecture on everything arty,
Based on having once met Stan Sakai at a party.
He'll find Donna and Terrie at 7 am,
And he'll hang 'round all day, 'cause the bastard's a fanboy to them.

Ah, he's so full of himself. He'll expect you to say he's as good as a pro.
Ah, and he never gives in. And he never works out you just don't want to know.

And he'll spend the whole con at your merchandise table.
And he'll stay like he's bound by titanium cable.
And he'll drive all your int'rested buyers away.
And the most he will spend's about fifty-one cents, and a bloody great fanboy he'll stay.



DOING UNTO OTHERS — **Terry Knight**

The vixen blasting away at an unknown foe was inspired a lot by *Aliens*—big pulse-rifle type weapon, etc. Here, she's in a ship corridor fighting a rearguard action and basically "letting the enemy have it!"



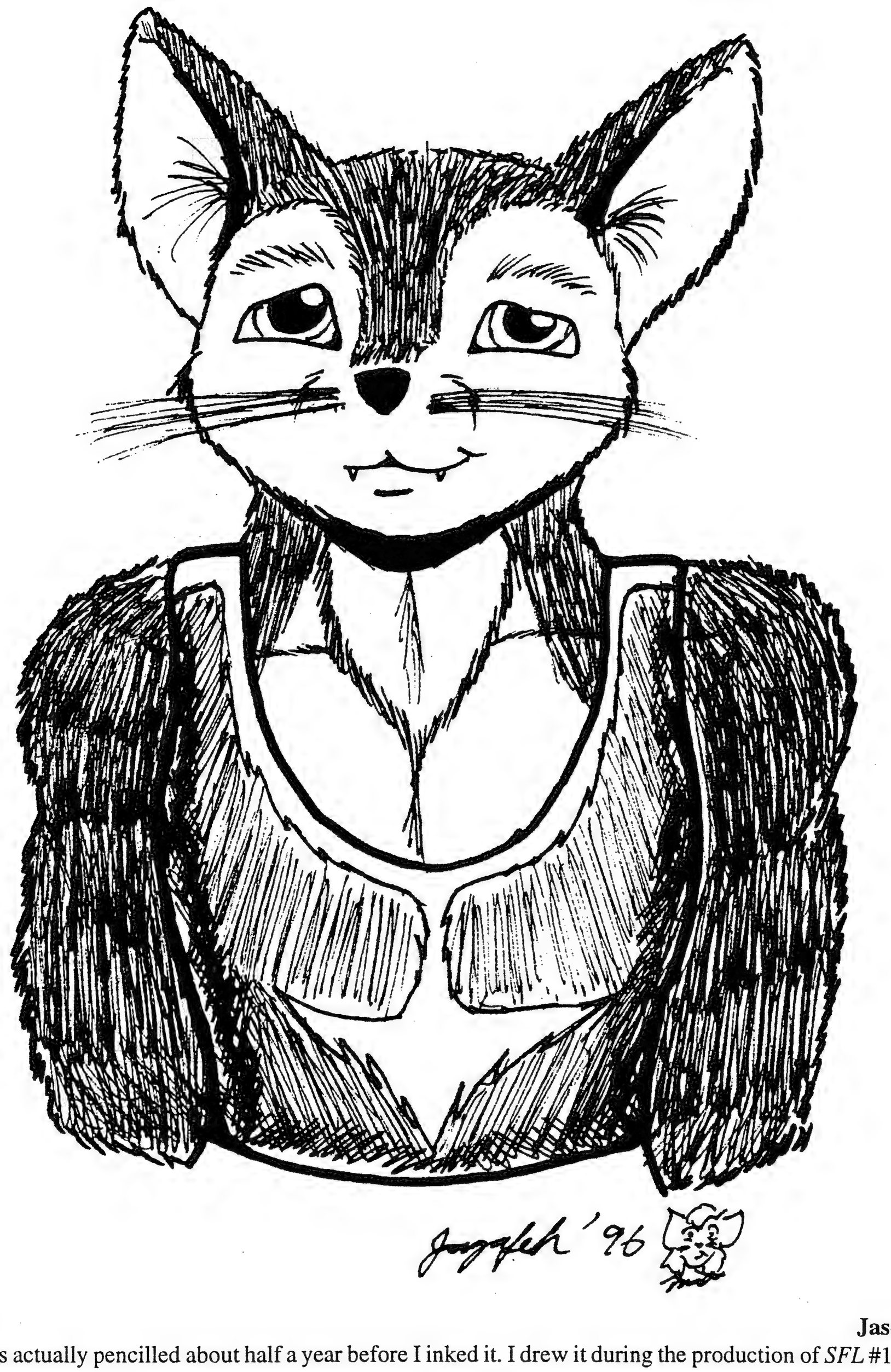
CROWDED BAR SCENE **Amy Pronovost**

Definitely one of my favourite drawings in this bunch. Do you know how hard it is to do a drawing like this? Neither do I... it just comes naturally.



RAT-ON-A-ROPE **Amy Pronovost**

I like drawing things swinging on ropes. I love rats.



CHESTY BONDS **Jason Gaffney**

This picture was actually pencilled about half a year before I inked it. I drew it during the production of *SFL* #1 when I was bored and it just worked. All the hatching was done over the pencilled hatching almost exactly line for line. Personally, if I try to hatch after inking, it doesn't work so I usually pencil all hatching and stippling first. The title of this piece is actually the name of a brand of singlet. I just thought it appropriate. (And anyway, I'd rather see my character than Paul Mercurio dancing around.)

IN·THAT·GOOD·OLD·MEGAFUTURE;·JUST·DOWNLOADED

PEOPLE WILL CARRY UNFATHOMABLY LARGE GUNS WITH MASSIVE AMMO-AMOUNTS~

-TILL THEIR FINGERS BLEED!

YUP- IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO FEEL ANY EMOTION IN THIS MODERN COOL WHIRL~

BUILDINGS WILL BE BIGGER PERSPECTIVES WILL BE FORCED, EXPERIENCE DIGITIZED, CYNICISM ROMANCED, SCIENCE A GLIBLY PRETENTIOUS VIDEO GAME WITH NUMEROUS SUPERFICIAL CULTURAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL REFERENCES, POPULAR CULTURE AS HISTORY, SEX AS ARTIFICIAL AS YOUR LAST RELATIONSHIP, AS EVER.

AND, AS EVER, WITH THE DETERIORATION OF MORAL, SOCIAL, ETHICAL AND WHATEVER STANDARDS WE CHEAPLY SELL EVERY DAY, THE BIGGEST VICTIM WILL BE-

!FASHION!

-these trenchcoats are damned uncomfortable-

·FROM·YOUR·VIDEOFRIED·IMAGINATION·- WITH THE W·S·K·S!!

STOPET! CYBERTHIS! CYBERTHAT! SELLS! CYBERCYPHER! STOPET!! MEMBER WHEN GIBSON WAS IT A GUITAR- I'M SICK TO GODDAM DEATH OF IT! I WANT NO PART OF IT! I'M BOSS OF MY LIFE!! SOSTOPET!

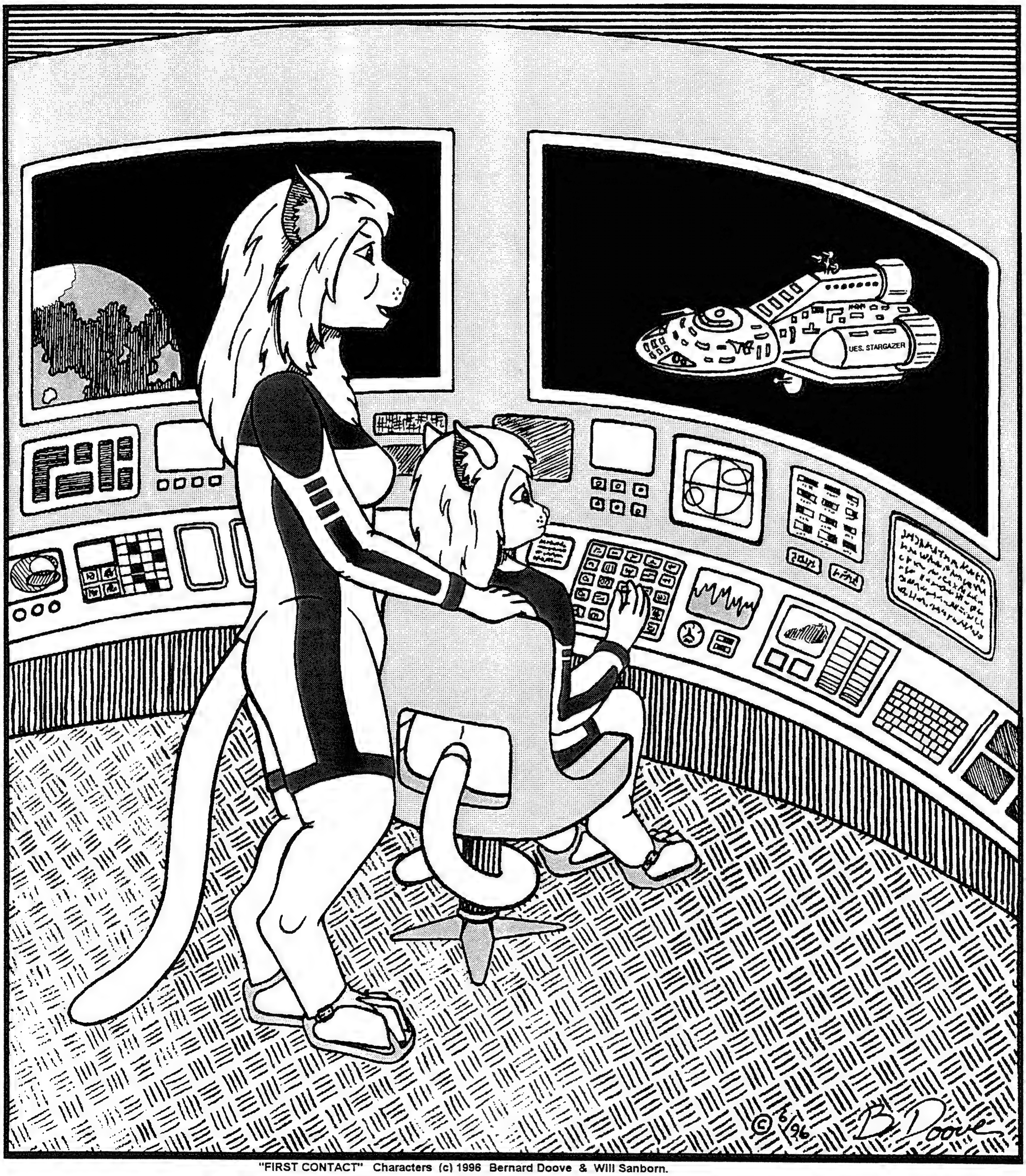
-HMMM- THOSE CYBERVOCAL IMPLANTS WORK A TREAT, DUN'THEY? -STILL- SHOULD I TELL HIM HE'S A SIMULATION?

NAH, LEMME. JUST RIP HIM INTO STATIC- huh- CAN I, DOC? CAN I? hen? IT'S FOR THE SAKE'A' SCIENCE

BY AKAMATH

FIRST CONTACT: THE RRAKITH

by Will A. Sanborn
with Bernard Doove,
illustrated by Bernard Doove



"FIRST CONTACT" Characters (c) 1996 Bernard Doove & Will Sanborn.

Well, this system's almost done, the captain thought with a sense of accomplishment, as she began reading through the last of the teams' reports. In a couple of days the final steps would be taken and yet another solar system would be through a preliminary surveying. What's more, this was the last star they were scheduled this time out, and she felt a small, contented smile twitching on her lips as the thought of the journey home to loved ones sparkled through her mind.

Her reverie was ended abruptly by an intrusion from one of the crew. "Captain, sensors are picking up an object that appears to be another starship. It's heading on a course that will bring it quite close to us, and will be here very soon. It's moving at an enormous velocity, yet the instruments say it's also decelerating at an impossible rate."

Moving from her chair to the crew-member's station, the captain stood over her, consulting the instruments intently, quickly corroborating her findings. "Bring it up on the viewer," she ordered, the excitement leaking out from her voice.

"There it is, Captain," a small marker encircling the fuzzy dot on the screen.

"There shouldn't be another one of our ships around here, not this far out, and we would have received word if another ship was dispatched to this region," watching the blob grow as it drew nearer.

As the image on the screen began to coalesce and clarify, the ship still growing in size, cloudy realisation dawned into certainty. Watching the craft pull closer into view, its design an oddly-shaped one, the edges of the hull flowing in some alien aesthetics, any doubt was expunged from their minds.

Finally, with the unknown craft close enough to see the strange markings stencilled across it, possibly letters in some unknown script, new questions were rapidly forming. Losing herself in the image, the alien letters of the *UES Stargazer* having no meaning for her, the captain lowered an ear, and twitching her tail in puzzlement, wondered just where this strange craft could have possibly come from.

* * *

"Ah Daniel, you're here. Good, we're almost at optimal range" one of the members of the late-night crew called out as the captain entered the bridge, the vestiges of sleep still showing on him, but quickly being replaced by his growing excitement.

"Yes Terrie, I trust you didn't wake me up for nothing," he replied, winking, then looking at the image before them, his face betrayed his astonishment. "So that's it then, it's finally happened?" letting it out with a gasp.

"Yes, we picked it up on long-range sensors fifteen minutes ago, but we weren't absolutely sure until we got closer for a better look. We almost didn't breathe for a few minutes there."

Looking in amazement at the vessel hovering before them, floating just outside of the virtual window of the viewscreen, there were several moments of silence, as if not daring to question the reality facing them.

Briefly surveying the other people on the bridge, the captain spoke again. "I think this is something we've all been waiting a long time for, and now we've got the chance to finally do it..." Pausing, he added, "Mick, have you been able to make any radio contact with them?"

"Yes, but only a few minutes ago. On our approach we scanned all the frequencies and found a couple of channels on which we can talk with them. Right now I'm working on the standard mathematical-progressions protocol. It took them a bit of time, but they've caught on and are working through the patterns with us. It's not much, but we are talking with them," the officer finished with a sparkle in his eyes.

The next several hours passed in an excited stream of little accomplishments, until Mick triumphantly announced, "We've got visuals!"

All eyes turning toward him, he added a brief explanation. "They finally must have been able to decode our signals, I've been sending out a video loop of clips from our archives, test patterns mainly, a few of the canned greeting files and shots of Earth. They started sending back their own data, which took a bit of massaging, with the computer's help, to figure out the coding and image size, but we've got something that we can look at now..."

Keying in a short command sequence, a smaller window appeared in a corner on the main viewer, eclipsing part of the alien craft. The image wasn't perfect, but it still commanded respect.

"I'm not sure if the colours are correct or if it's supposed to be this grainy. I had to have the computer guess the mapping from typical colour distributions, but who knows if that means anything. The first few images look okay, though washed out a little."

His explanation was overlooked for the moment at least, as the rest of the crew on the bridge watched the images cycle slowly through, their gaze stuck intently on the screen, hanging on each new scene.

The first few pictures looked to be the counterpart of the data they'd sent out to their fellow, but unknown, travellers. The images would have been boring, had it not been the first time human eyes had come across them. Simple test images, various geometric patterns, overlaid with text in an alien script, its letters scrawled out, yet stylised in some unearthly way, commanding the attention of those regarding them.

Flipping through the images, they became more and more intricate and animated. Showing an alien world, a planetary system orbiting some foreign star, then views of their starships, and glimpses of their cities. Finally, the show ended in the grand climax, as a visual of the beings themselves appeared before them.

No one moved, or scarcely breathed, as their eyes remained locked on the realisation of the aliens in front of them. Whatever they'd been expecting, whatever vision they might have conjured up, the reality of the situation now confronted them. There, faced with a combination of something so familiar and ordinary, yet so fantastic, even their wildest imaginations seemed pale in comparison. For on the screen stood the aliens, walking upright on two legs, vaguely fitting into the humanoid mold, while wearing a seemingly improbable mask. With their paws outstretched to the viewer, their ears at attention, the felines stood before them, their tails twitching and the lips of their muzzles moving, speaking in an alien tongue.

* * *

Chief medical officer, Joan Chen, was the last of the four to assemble for the quick briefing in the shuttle bay. Looking a bit harried from her quick preparations, the energy of the excitement they all felt was flowing through her as well.

"Okay Joan, with you here, that's everyone. Is everything ready?"

"As well as we can plan on, Daniel" she delivered with a nervous smile. "I've gone through the info you sent me, and am up with everyone else on this."

"All right let's do it. We'll need to proceed with some caution, but again, this is the mission we've all been waiting for. We've done as much as we can through transmissions; the shuttle's all prepped and it's time to meet our friends in person."

Taking the small craft out away from the ship, they made the approach to the other vessel carefully, moving at a reduced speed, and with a signalling beacon on to alert their neighbours of their approach. Moving to rest in front of the alien craft, now looming larger than life before them, they waited the agonising few minutes before a slight movement caught their attention.

Emerging from a side landing bay, a small craft made its way to their location. When the complement to the human vessel had made its rendezvous with its new-found visitors, their shuttle began the slow and cautious escort, leading the humans into what, from viewing the alien's transmissions, literally could be the lion's den.

With bated breath the crew waited as the shuttle was brought to a smooth landing within the foreign landing bay. Studying an instrument panel, Mick finally broke the silence. "The atmospheric readings are good, similar to Terran standards, and are well within safety tolerances." Following Daniel's silent move, they exited the safety of their craft to confront whatever might be waiting for them, hearts pounding, both with apprehension and excitement.

Standing before them in the confined openness of the bay were five of the aliens, even more improbable in person, yet so tangible, watching them with unblinking feline eyes. The two races stood like that, gazing at one another for a small eternity, each side appraising the other with reserved astonishment.

Now up close, the humans got a much better look of their hosts. The felines stood upright on digitigrade feet, the large soles of their paws supporting their weight. Besides the obvious catlike attributes, the aliens' body structure was similar to humans, with a slightly shorter stature. Poking up through the flowing manes of hair framing feline faces of golden-brown and tawny-yellow fur, the large ears of every alien were standing at attention, their tails twitching softly behind them as they watched the visitors.

The gulf was finally breached when a single alien, a female and presumably the captain, stepped forward. Holding out her arms, partially extending them in front of her, she brought her palms facing upwards. Then cocking her head to one side ever so slightly, she uttered the first words of theirs ever to reach a human's ear.

"Rrimmak iggan terkarmok *Kevar-Trennek.* Yevvak Mkkarr Pak Sserral, petrek kos Rramatharr Terkar Ferrak. Jattek tuk do wekkam," the tones of her voice rumbling softly with a the timbres of a throaty purr.

Reacting quickly, the human captain was quick to respond, pantomiming the alien's gesture. "Hello, my name is Daniel Simpson, captain of the United Earth Starship *Stargazer.* Thank you for letting us aboard, and we wish to extend our peaceful greetings to you."

Then turning to one of his crew mates, he proceeded to offer his hand to them, the aliens watching intently as they shook hands. Facing the alien captain once again, he slowly stepped forward two paces and offered her his hand.

Their eyes locked as she regarded him, the slightly-elliptical pupils of her hazel eyes silently studying him. With the others looking on, she reached out and tentatively took his hand. As they shook hands in an uncertain gesture, they continued to appraise one another, gathering as much information as possible, minds straining to keep up with the situation.

Daniel noticed several things about the aliens then, little observations, but each important in its own right. First of all, while their hands were similar to those of humans, they only had four digits, three fingers and an opposable thumb, the light fur covering their body absent on their fingertips and palms. Their fingers were also a little shorter than a human's, appearing slightly squat, but still looked capable of fine manipulations of objects. Also, glancing around at the other four creatures standing behind their captain, he noticed that while he'd come aboard with a mixed-gender complement, all five of the aliens who'd come to meet them were female.

Ending the handshake, still watching the aliens watching him and his crew, Daniel spoke again, more to his fellow humans than the felines. "Well, now what do we do?" Seeing the alien captain's look of confusion, straining to try and comprehend their visitors strange words, he turned to the doctor.

"Joan, have you got the translators ready?"

"Yes, but I don't know how useful they'll be. They were designed for this, hoping it would happen someday, but we've only used them on humans before. I don't know how our friend's will react to it. It will take quite some time to get anything useful out of them anyway, you can't just learn alien brain structure and language components at the flip of a switch."

"I know, but it's the best thing we've got, and now is as good a time for a field test as ever."

Taking the two headbands and putting one on himself, he returned his attention to the alien captain. "I know you can't understand me, but this is something that with a little time can help us talk to one another." Doing his best at pantomime, he managed to get the basic idea across and was able to convince the dubious feline to don the second headband.

With five sets of alien eyes boring down on them, he gestured over to the doctor. "Okay, bring it on line, but take it slowly. We don't know what kind of an effect it could have on them."

Standing over the unit, a moderately-bulky, yet portable device she'd set up on one of the storage containers lying near her, Joan keyed in a short sequence of commands. Intently watching its screen flicker to life, she brought up several waveforms; at the same time, small indicator lights on both headbands blinked on as the circuitry woven into them was engaged.

With an almost perceptible ripple, the alien captain's body gave a small shiver. Her crew tensed at this, but the effect was short-lived and the feline recovered, her pupils just slightly dilated and her ears flickering near attention.

Daniel's reaction was similar, but not as pronounced. When both parties had adjusted to the new sensations buzzing lightly through their minds, he turned to gesture towards the view of his ship seen through the invisible force field

covering the mouth of the landing bay. "Once again, that is our ship, the *Stargazer*, we hail from Earth, approximately sixty-eight light years from here."

The alien's reply was just as incomprehensible as before, coming out in its soft rumblings.

"Okay, I guess we need to start with something simple." Pointing to himself, then to the members of his crew, he added, "We're called humans," pausing he repeated, "humans."

"Rrakith," was the feline's reply, gesturing in a similar fashion to her own kind.

Pointing back to the *Stargazer*, he followed "Starship."

Flicking her ear, then briefly tilting her head to the side and back up again, the captain mimicked him in her tongue, "Terkarmok."

"Turkahmock," he tried to repeat it, his tongue fumbling on the alien phonemes. The feline's ears flicked again, more so than before, and he thought he saw a slight twitch of her lips, perhaps stifling an almost imperceptible smirk.

Turning to one of his crew, who'd been capturing the whole proceedings with an image-recorder, he remarked, "Well it looks like this might take a bit of time," a small sparkle in his eyes tempering the excitement and slight frustration in his voice.

* * *

"So Joan, it looks like our work these past several days has paid off," the captain addressed the doctor as they sat in his office, glancing out the window, watching the alien ship hovering near them. "The translators appear to be quite functional. I've been able to have a couple of good conversations with their captain because of them."

"Yes, it's remarkable at just how well they've worked, adapting so quickly. I was worried that the learning curve would be much steeper, though having multiple pairs running in parallel, and off-loading the data to the main computer for training was a phenomenal improvement." Pausing she added, so how are things going with the Rrakith?"

"Very good, very good indeed. From what we've been able learn their technology level isn't as advanced as ours. For one thing they haven't developed hyperspace travel yet, and can only travel at near-light speeds."

"This was a bit of a sticky subject," he continued, "as they appear to be very prideful and there was a little bit of a misunderstanding when one of our engineers lightly put down one of their technological developments. It wasn't intentional, it's just that when they were giving us a tour, one of them showed us a piece of their equipment. Someone made a comment about it being like something they hadn't seen since the academy. When their engineer realised he was referring to it as something quaint, she was a bit put out by it."

"I trust things have been smoothed over?"

"Yes, they're not arrogant, just very proud of their accomplishments, so it was a little tweak of their noses to find out we're a few jumps ahead of them. They are eager to learn from us though, especially when they found out we can travel faster than light, and I think there's a good amount they could show us themselves."

Seeing her nod in agreement, he continued. "Which is why I've thought about their request to help them get home through hyperspace, and have decided to go forward on it."

"In all due respect Daniel, is that something we should do?"

"I've thought about it and I think it is. We already know that ships can be towed through hyperspace safely, and that way we can use our own engines and will not have to give up any trade secrets. All that is necessary is to install several stabilising-field generators on their ship to keep things okay during transit. I already have Nile and a team working on it."

"This will also be a show of good faith, especially when they arrive home in a little over a day, as opposed to several months, and will make a very good impression on their leaders, which will make any talks with them start a lot easier."

"Their captain also alluded to them having medical technologies which are more advanced than their other areas." Seeing Joan's reaction, he continued. "I knew you'd be interested in that. Now that the work with the translators is done, I'd like you to meet with their senior doctor and do some work with her."

"Definitely. I've been looking forward to talking with their medical staff, and finding out as much about them as possible," she replied with an energetic smile.

As she was getting up to exit the room, he added, "Just one more thing Joan, something that I've noticed about them."

"Yes?"

"With the Rrakith you've seen, you haven't seen any males have you?"

"No, I'd noticed that their entire crew seems to be female. I figured it was a little strange, but maybe they have segregated work environments or something."

"That could be, but have you noticed that they seem to be a bit uncomfortable around men? I've caught more than a couple of them giving me and a few other crew members odd glances."

"Hmmm, that does seem a little odd, but it could be the effect of the segregation. Perhaps their sexual politics are vastly different from ours and they usually don't have interaction between the sexes, unless for mating... Under those circumstances, I could see why they'd find it strange for us to have both men and women on our ship, and they just might not be that used to males."

"I guess. That would make sense. Maybe after working with their doctor for awhile you can broach the subject with her."

"We'll see."

* * *

Having arrived on the other ship, a Rrakith met Joan and escorted her to their sick bay and medical offices. The trip, while short, was still a little unnerving. Not having unpacked the translator, the two of them could not communicate, and even if they could, what sort of small talk would they make? While she'd seen enough of the aliens over the past several days to no longer be shocked by them, she was still far from being used to them. Just watching her escort walk, with the subtle fluidity of a cat added to an almost-human gait, was enough of a reminder to not get too complacent. From her companion's nervous twitching of her tail and ears pulled back ever so-slightly, Joan figured the feelings were probably mutual.

Still, even with the uncomfortable situation, her heart still beat a little faster and her mind tingled with anticipation. How long had mankind dreamed of finding someone else out here amongst the stars? Now she was one of the few fortunate enough to experience such a meeting for the

first time, in its most primal form, unfiltered by any previous contacts, with new discoveries awaiting at every step.

Reaching the medical suite, Joan was greeted by another Rrakith, again a female, whom she took for their chief physician. The escort leaving the two of them alone, Joan smiled slightly at this new Rrakith. She was very careful not to show any teeth; another little *faux pas* which had caused a bit of friction when one of them had mistaken a human's toothy grin for aggression, and while not going on the offensive, had ridden up on their hackles a bit. The situation had been diffused quickly though, as luck would have it the translators were highly functional then, and some hasty explanations prevented things from escalating.

The Rrakith doctor's lips twitched in a small smirk and she held out her hands to Joan, who mirrored their welcoming gesture. Then setting up the translator, this one a smaller and more-manageable unit than the original device required for the initial training, Joan put on one of the headbands and handed the other to her alien counterpart.

As the unit hummed into life and they both felt the now-familiar subtle tingling of the headbands, Joan held out her hand. "Hello, I'm Joan Chen, the chief medical officer from the *Stargazer*. I assume you were expecting me?"

Taking her hand, the Rrakith replied "Yes Joan," the sounds of her words transforming in the human's mind, yet still with their apparent, alien accent, her name slightly twisted by lips not used to human language. "My name is Ssarrabi Pak Trekkar, the head doctor for the *Star-Runner*. It's good to finally get a chance to meet with someone from medical personnel, now that things have calmed down a bit."

Maybe it was just the fact that they were able to communicate, but Joan felt more at ease. Also if first impressions held even a grain of truth, she thought she liked the Rrakith doctor and what came off as a warm demeanour, at least in a formal setting.

"Well Joan, I guess we should start with a tour of our medical facilities."

Following her through the medical suite, Joan watched on with rapt attention as Ssarrabi eagerly showed her the main components of their equipment. While their technology in other areas might be lacking, their captain had been right when she'd said their medical sciences were more advanced. As Joan looked on, she was drawn more into the tour, which quickly became animated and interactive, both her and Ssarrabi finding common ground in their interest in the marvels of Rrakith medical engineering. Not only were the principles of many devices familiar to her, Joan found that their life sciences were not only on par with humans, but in a few areas they seemed to have surged ahead.

In the middle of the tour, Ssarrabi interrupted the proceedings to look at Joan quizzically and ask "Joan, what are your perceptions of us? I know you're still a little uncomfortable around us, which is understandable, as we're not anywhere near being used to each other yet, but I'm just curious what your first impressions were?" Her question came out easily given the shortness of their acquaintance, perhaps spurred on by the comfortable rapport they'd found while discussing shop talk.

A little stunned by her openness, Joan hesitated a moment before responding. "Well Ssarrabi," now it was her turn to stumble over the other's name, "of course it was somewhat of a shock to us. We didn't know what to expect, and when we first saw you, it came as a bit of surprise."

"I can understand that, we didn't know what to expect of you either."

"Well it was a little more than that for us, what with your body proportions and design being similar to ours, at least enough for comparisons, but what was the biggest surprise is how much you look like cats."

"Cats?" Ssarrabi replied, her voice and expression showing confusion.

Almost as soon as she'd said it, Joan had realised it wasn't the best time to bring the subject up, but the damage had been done. Fumbling for a response, she replied, "Cats or felines are a genus of fauna on our homeworld, and your race has surprisingly many characteristics of their appearances."

"You mean there's another sentient race besides humans on your world, why don't you have any cats serving on board your vessel?"

Fearing the worst, Joan was forced to follow through. "No Ssarrabi, cats are a group of several species of animals on our world..." her voice trailing off, looking sheepishly at the Rrakith before her.

Taken aback with wounded pride, Ssarrabi just stared at her for several moments before replying, "You mean to say we remind you of animals?" her voice tensing and her ears turning back.

"No, it's not what I meant... it was just that we weren't expecting you to be so familiar yet so different... I didn't mean that at all Ssarrabi, I'm sorry."

Waiting, watching the Rrakith look at her with emotions both human and alien, Joan finally reached out to grasp Ssarrabi's hand in hers, holding it, looking into her eyes, trying to diffuse the situation. After several more moments passed, she softly uttered "I'm sorry, I didn't mean it that way."

Her expression softening, Ssarrabi regained her composure and finally replied, "All right Joan, I think I can understand... your race looks so different to us too, since you don't have any fur, and we can't read your emotions as easily without you having a tail and with those small ears of yours..." Half forcing a tiny smirk, she finishes, "We're both not used to this and we need to keep these misunderstandings from ruining our potential relationship."

The atmosphere between them was still uncomfortable, but they were able to return to the tour. As the minutes passed they got lost in the technical discussion once again, their dialogue warming once again, the recent mishap just a tiny thought, barely nagging in the corner of their minds.

As they finished up, Joan commented to her new-found colleague, "Thank you Ssarrabi, your medical suite is quite impressive and it was an interesting tour." Seeing the Rrakith's expression register her praise, she continued. "I'd like to go over some of your databases with you and look at your medical data. I'm very interested in your physical makeup and would like to see some anatomy studies."

"Of course Joan," her pleasant demeanour returned once again. "We're just as curious about you. If you don't mind, would it be possible for me to take a scan of you first, to get some data on humans?"

"Certainly," Joan replied, caught up in the excitement of the sharing of information and the promise of all they could learn from one another.

Ssarrabi showed her to an examination table which she

laid down upon with little ceremony, accustomed to the situation, having performed similar tests with her patients countless times before. "How long will a complete scan take?" she asked, looking up at the vaguely familiar-looking apparatus overhead.

"About fifteen seconds to image over your whole body with the different wavelengths," Ssarrabi replied, her fingers gliding over the control panel.

With the scan complete, while Ssarrabi was intently studying the displays showing various aspects of the human's biological makeup, Joan got up from the table to stand beside her. Turning her head slightly to glance at Joan over her shoulder, Ssarrabi offered, "A lot of your systems are quite similar to ours. There's differences of course, and it looks like you have at least a couple of organs that don't correspond to anything we have, but overall the similarities are striking," her voice showing her excited interest.

Then as she returned to consult the images, she stopped abruptly and turned to Joan with a look of concern on her face. "Joan, where is your penis?" was all she asked.

Now it was the Joan's turn to be taken aback, floored by Ssarrabi's question, which in all its absurdity had come from her with great earnestness. "What, my penis... what are you talking about?" she managed to fumble out.

"Your reproductive anatomy is all wrong Joan, you're missing your male organs. Are you okay... did something happen to you?" Ssarrabi's voice hushed at this.

"What do you mean 'male' anatomy?" What are you talking about Ssarrabi? Everything is just the way it should be for me down there," her confusion mixed with discomfort at the Rrakith's statements.

"You must know what I mean Joan, your reproductive system is only half complete. How can things be normal if you're missing the male components?"

The realisation washing over her in a flash of brilliant understanding, Joan blurted out her response before fully grasping the ramifications of it. "You mean that you're hermaphrodites, both sexes in the same body?"

"Of course Joan, that's why I'm so concerned..." then pausing as the realisation rocked through her, she slowly added, "You mean you're normally this way... your sexes are divided like that?"

"Yes, Ssarrabi. Oh, that's why we thought you were all females, and why you were so uncomfortable around the men of the crew."

"You mean those of you whose bodies are so different? The ones with shrunken breasts?"

"Yes... you must have thought they were sick or something."

"So you really are divided into two forms, those with the male organs and those with female?" Ssarrabi looked very incredulous at Joan's affirmation. "We've seen that before, in some of the strange animals of our world, but it's very rare and we never thought it would happen in a species so advanced and with sentience..." her voice trailing off as she pondered the ramifications of this.

It was then Joan's turn to be a little offended at the comparison to local fauna, but she was more concerned with the ideas that were beginning to flood her consciousness. How could a species like that function? Her mind reeling in quiet revulsion.

"I would have never thought it would be possible to see a well-developed race with the sexes split like that... Why would the Maker create you with such limited forms?" Ssarrabi was caught up in her own thoughts of turmoil, softly shuddering as a stray thought caught her attention, perhaps thinking of what it might be like to be without such an integral and intimate part of her anatomy, as Joan was forced to live everyday.

The extreme discomfort of the situation was shortly shattered by an outburst from a speaker hidden nearby, the barrage of alien language disrupting their thoughts with its perfect timing. "Ssarrabi, what did that message say?" Joan asked, seeing her jump to alertness at the unknown words. "The translator only works between people wearing the headsets."

"There's been an accident, Joan, in one of the cargo bays where the engineers are working on the equipment your crew brought over. There's been some sort of a power surge and besides incapacitating everyone working on it, it has also damaged the circuits to the force-field generator closing the mouth of the bay, and they're starting to falter."

"Then if the field cuts out...?" her voice echoing Ssarrabi's concern.

"Yes, they'll all be blown out into space. We need to get down there quickly and try and save them."

Moving with Ssarrabi as she gathered up her essential instruments, Joan grabbed at the translator unit and the few implements she'd brought with her. Then following her out the door of the medical suite, the two of them raced down the hall.

Arriving minutes later outside the cargo bay, their path was blocked by the large metallic doors forced shut over the entrance. Two Rrakith rescue technicians were frantically working on the situation, having taken off a large access panel near the door to grapple with the complex circuitry inside. Ssarrabi asked them the status of the situation with great urgency, but Joan could not comprehend the technician's hurried response.

Struggling against the pressures of the situation, their efforts paid off, and the heavy doors finally parted to give them entrance. Behind the opening, the situation looked intimidating, as the main lights had failed, leaving only flickering emergency lights. Warning klaxons blared away as signal lights on various devices, including a unit on the far wall near the bay opening, flashed in distress. Amidst it all lay the members of the engineering staff, two Rrakith and a human, caught in the blast of the surge, now lying still, paused in the uncertainty between unconsciousness and death.

The four of them quickly surveyed the situation and rushed into the room. The two technicians took the job of attending to the damaged equipment, while Ssarrabi ran to one of the fallen Rrakith and Joan knelt down next to the human victim. As she was frantically checking for life signs, one of the technicians shouted something. Looking over at Ssarrabi, she translated for her. "The field generator is still fluctuating. They don't know how long they can keep it from failing... We need to get out of here soon!"

Turning back to the human lying before her, Joan continued to search for signs of life. Her job was difficult though, with all the distractions around her, the warning bells still sounding and the lights flickering in chaotic patterns. To make things worse, the few instruments she had were not really suited for the job. They gave some readings, but were not as robust as the tools in any standard terran vessel emer-


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gency medical kit, of which she was without one in the present situation.

Struggling with the meagre instruments she had with her, she was able to get a few basic readings, but they were far from conclusive. His life signs were definitely weak, but under these circumstances there wasn't much she could tell of his condition, and even worse, there was little she could do to alter the situation.

Flooded with frustration and concern, her pulse racing and her mind reeling, she glanced to Ssarrabi once again to see her busy with her own patient, her attention consumed by her task. Then looking over to one of the technicians, she saw that she was beginning to examine the device which had most likely caused the surge in the first place.

Standing in front of the alien equipment of the hyperspace stabilising-field generator, the technician looked down at the unit which had been recently patched into the ships power lines. Studying the foreign controls and , the technician looked confused, at an impasse at how to handle this unknown, and possibly unsteady device.

Watching her tentatively touch the unit, hesitating to access any of the controls, a small thought tugged at the bottom of Joan's consciousness, yearning to break free and surface to clarity. Recalling safety-protocol lectures from her training so long ago, the glimmer of a memory became more bothersome. That, paired with a flash of intuition, spurred her thought processes on.

Perhaps she'd seen a glimpse of the warning icons on the generator's display, meaningless symbols to the technician, or maybe it was just a burst of inspiration, whatever it was, the realisation hit her with full force. Struggling to react, she turned and yelled to Ssarrabi, "Get down and take cover!"

Jumping up from her crouching position, then lunging ahead towards the technician, she repeated her warning, but of course it was lost on her, without the benefit of a translator.

Crossing the distance between them in moments, she grabbed the confused Rrakith and roughly pushed her aside, catching her off guard and managing to throw her to the floor. Then colliding into the generator, she glanced down at the display with its flashing red warning displays.

With a desperate motion she grabbed at the emergency disconnect lever, pulling it back towards her as she tried to duck out of the way. Her timing was too late though, and as she broke the switch's contacts a bright flash of light erupted from the unit. Caught in the surge, she was thrown backwards by the force, her nerve endings burning in the rush of energy. Smashing to the floor with a pounding crash, her body collapsed like a discarded doll, and for Joan everything went black.

* * *

Consciousness came back slowly for her, as she gradually became aware of the light forcing its way through her closed eyelids. Opening her eyes to blink at the brightness, the blurry image resolved into Ssarrabi's visage, looking down at her with a concerned and protective expression on her feline face.

"How do you feel, Joan?"

Looking up, she could see the translator headband on the Rrakith's forehead, and apparently she was wearing one herself. Taking stock of the situation, she finally replied, "Okay, I guess... What happened?"

At that point, Ssarrabi's face was joined by that of Daniel's. "You had quite an accident Joan. Luckily you caught the second surge when you did though, or things could have been a lot worse for everybody."

"We were too hasty with trying to integrate our equipment with their systems. Their were some power fluctuations that we didn't understand which caused the first surge. The second surge was then slowly building up, and if you hadn't caught it when you did, everyone could've been hurt and they wouldn't have been able to get to work on you as quickly... Things could've turned out very bad." He shivered slightly at that.

"The technician I pushed out of the way... is she okay?" the events slowly coming back to her.

"Yes, she's fine, you were the only one to take the full brunt of the surge. She caught some of it, but wasn't wounded nearly as badly, and like you, they were able to get to her quickly. She's very thankful to you, and will be stopping by later to see you in person. In fact everyone is impressed with your heroics."

Her thoughts becoming more coherent, a matter of importance jumped to the forefront of her mind. "Nile... is he okay?"

His expression darkened and he paused momentarily before answering her. "No, it was too late for him, as it was for one of the Rrakith. There was only so much they could do. We were lucky that the surge you caught must not have been as powerful, plus they were able to rush you to immediate medical attention."

"I guess it was lucky that the accident happened on their ship too... Their medical technology is more advanced than ours, at least in a couple of key places. I don't know if there would have been too much we could've done for you, especially with the time it would've taken to get you back on board the *Stargazer*."

"They have developed some form of suspended animation," he continued, "and were able to hold your biological functions in stasis while they worked with our doctors to learn more about our anatomy, and fleshed out a way to help you. They're also further along in tissue repair and regrowth, which made a world of difference with some of the extensive damage you received. I'm told by both sets of physicians that you're as good as new."

Her mind still tumbling, sorting everything out, she managed to smile weakly up at him.

"You'll be fine Joan, you just need some rest," then with a quick glance toward Ssarrabi he added "and you're in excellent hands. She put in long hours these past few days making sure everything went right. I think your daring sacrifice has gotten a lot of attention, and you've made some fast friends because of it." With that he finished, and left to let her get some rest.

Looking up at Ssarrabi who was watching her warmly with caring emotions, Joan reached out a hand. When Ssarrabi took it gently, Joan softly said "I'm glad that we've met, even with these circumstances... It's just nice to know that humanity is no longer alone..."

Tilting her head slightly to the side in the Rrakith version of a nod, Ssarrabi held Joan's hand firmly in hers and smiled at her, watching her as she passed into a sound sleep.



DOWN ON THE FARM **Jason Gaffney**

This piece was drawn because we were one page short in this issue and Marko forced me to do something. (Thanks Marko:) I've really been into drawing pigs and rabbits lately and I thought I'd do one in a farm setting. I picked an American setting because they're much easier to lampoon. Heh! The cow in the background was put there after many suggestions by the guys in **Quarantine** to do a gag about the mad cow epidemic. I hope they're happy now.



TANISHA KALEALEA **Rommel C. Ignacio**

For centuries, fishing has been one of the numerous sources of livelihood and sustenance for Furries who live near bodies of water. Most tropical countries feature countless numbers of such watery wonders, and it would not be surprising for the power of the spear or net to yield a bounty of edibles. Meet Tanisha Kalealea™, a panther-hybrid, showing off what a quick spear thrust could do in a fishing spree.

"TOM WOLFE"

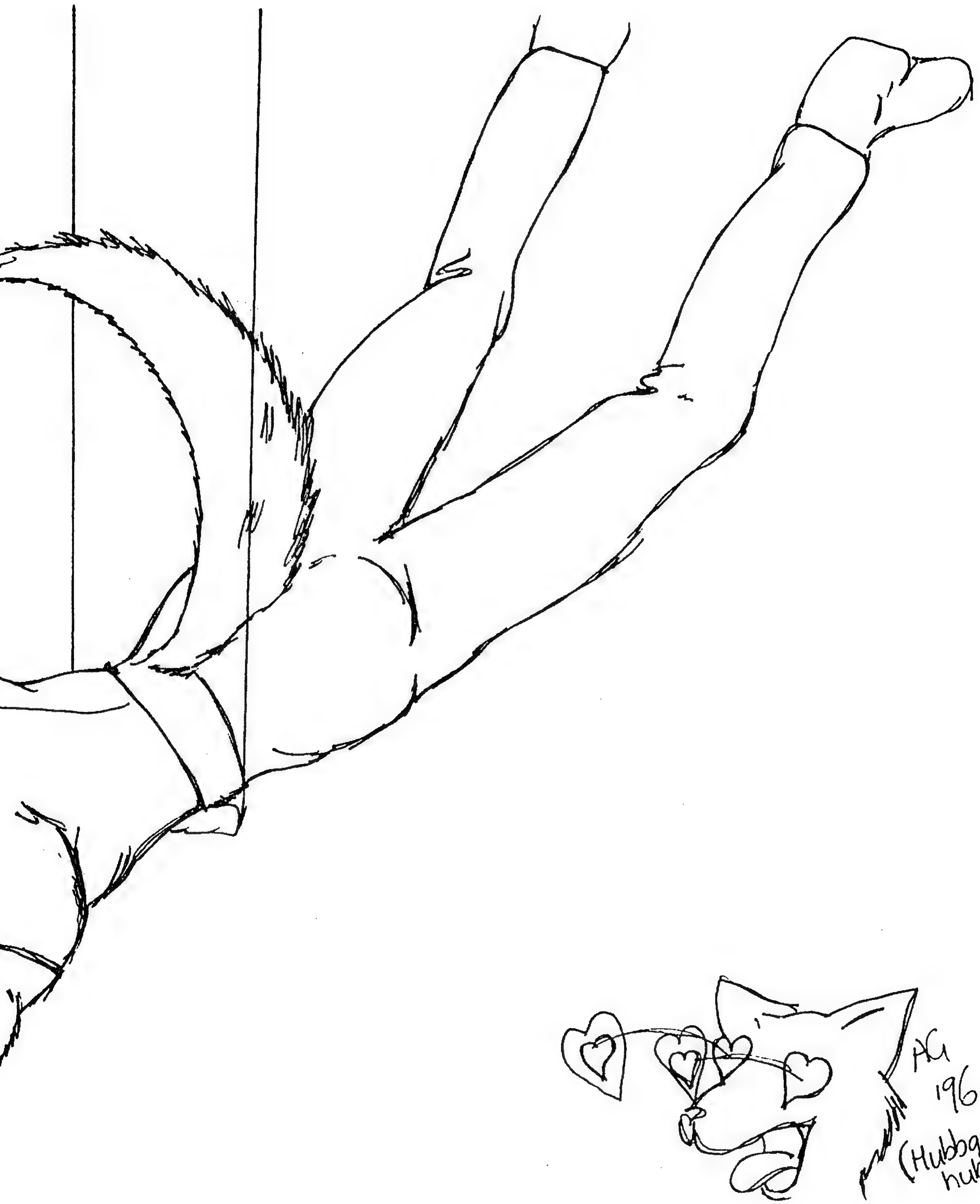
TOM WOLFE **Alison Gallienne**

No prizes for guessing how much I enjoyed *Mission Impossible*! I am an absolute sucker for high tech action and a hot secret agent! I was really impressed with the hacking-into-the-CIA-computer bit, so I just had to draw this gorgeous wolfie-character! I was going to shade his clothing, but I was afraid it would mar the work I did on his body. **Plus** the scene calls for hardly any background, which suits me just fine! This really is one of my favourite pieces ever. I'm very pleased with it.

WILD ROSES **Alison Gallienne**

I am a huge fan of Nick Cave and have been for years. This piece was influenced by his duet with Kylie: "Where the Wild Roses Grow". Here, however, the killer has returned, years later, to the scene of the murder. I have tried to keep it as Cave as possible—the skinny frame, the suit, the cigarette, the pointed shoes. I think the ferret is definitely his animal.





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(Hubba
hubba)



"WILD ROSES"





MIRRORSHADES

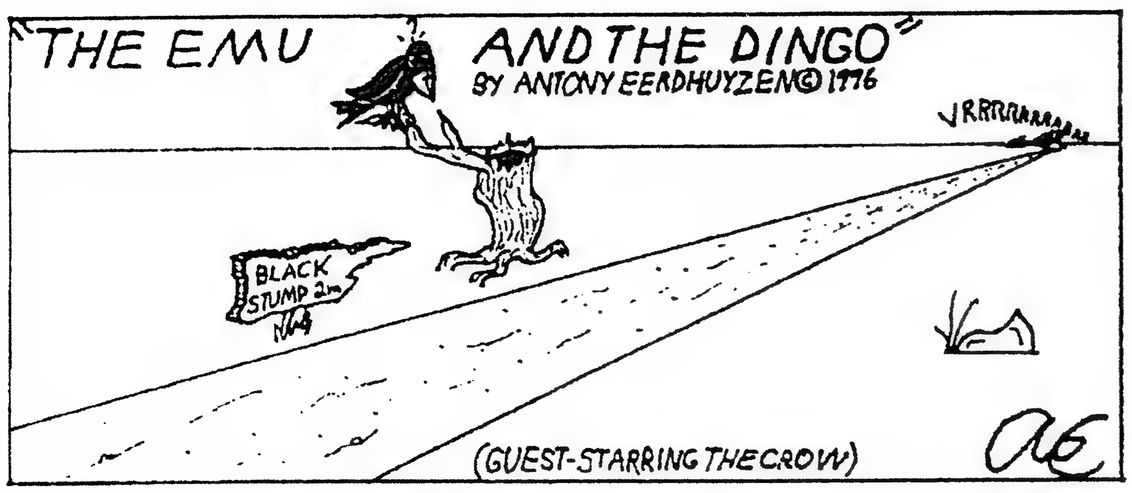
Grant Freckelton

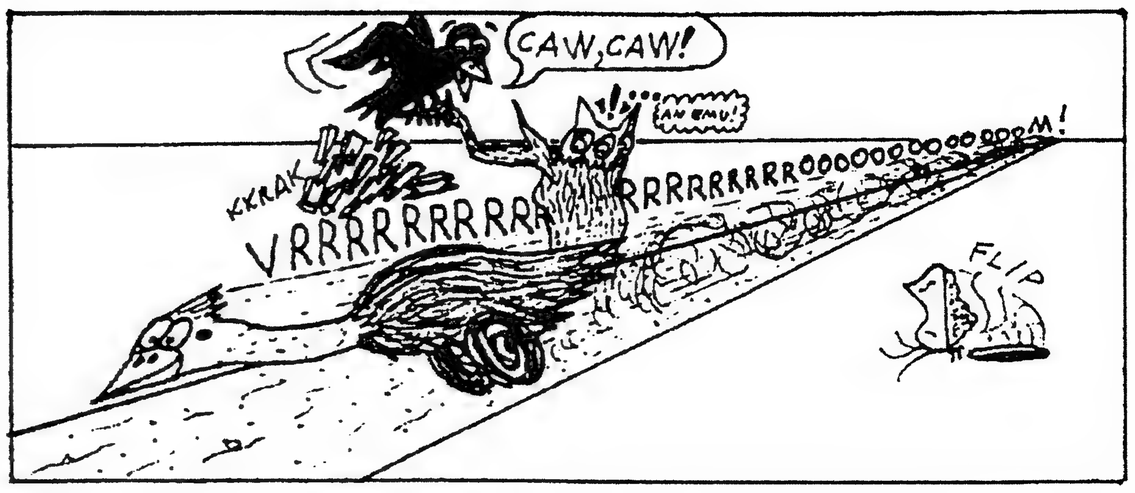
I started out wanting to draw a cool looking heroic character, Bond-esque (even though the final image has overtones of Ace from **Red Dwarf**, "Smoke me a kipper..."), with the mirrored glasses which both eliminate any intimacy or emotion from the eyes (a lesson learnt from **The Terminator**), as well as having an excuse to draw the reflectiveness of the lights and shadows on the mirrored surface. The gun was added for fun, but was cropped when the original A3 image was scanned on an A4 scanner. This is probably a good thing, seeing I have few reference books on weaponry, and my guns end up looking kind of silly.

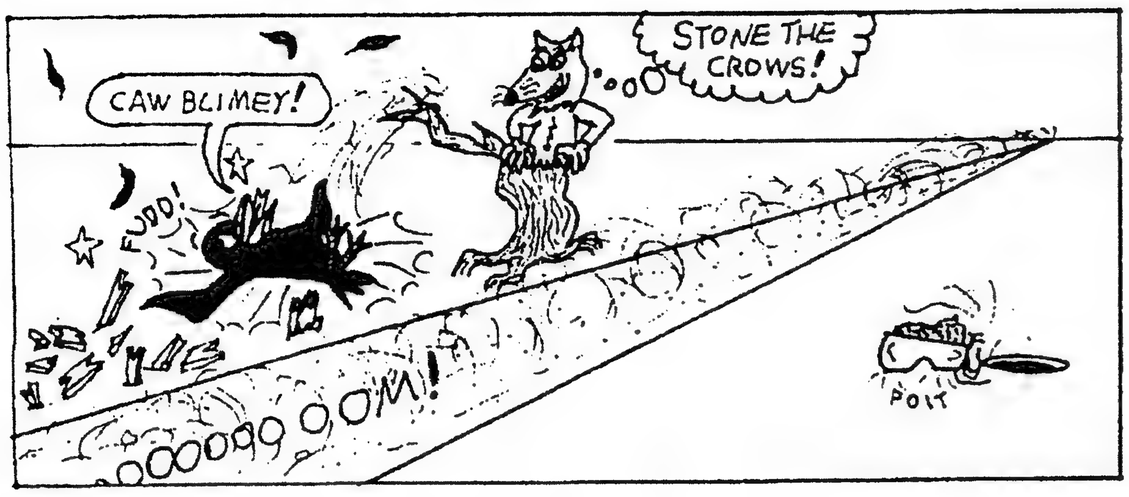
KREGGAN **GRANT FRECKELTON**

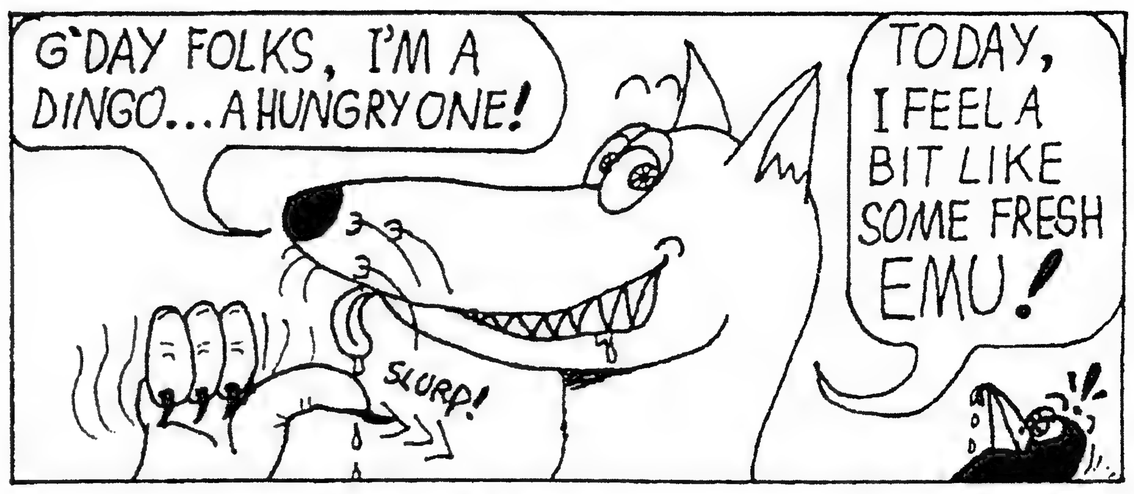
This started as nothing more than a unrendered sketch of a leg while waiting for a class to start, and developed into a nicely shaded picture of an eagle 'morph, a Wedge Tailed Eagle to be more species specific. With the leg sketch, I ended up drawing tail/pygostyle for the bird, then continued up, making a few adjustments to the anatomy to allow it to fit on the page. (The head is in that position because I hadn't planned out the composition, and was running out of page space fast.) The main thing that sets this in the anthropomorph category is the shape of the legs, lengthened to mimic the human form, and the character given to the face. I tried to keep the wings avian-like, not emulating the 6 limbed gryphon form or the wing hand design *à la* **Fusion**'s Haven, which seem to be popular amongst avians. When the image was rendered it was given the title KREGGAN after Ashley Kitto's YiffNet/FurryMuck character, which although strictly an 'intelligent animal', is also the only Wedge Tailed furry I know.

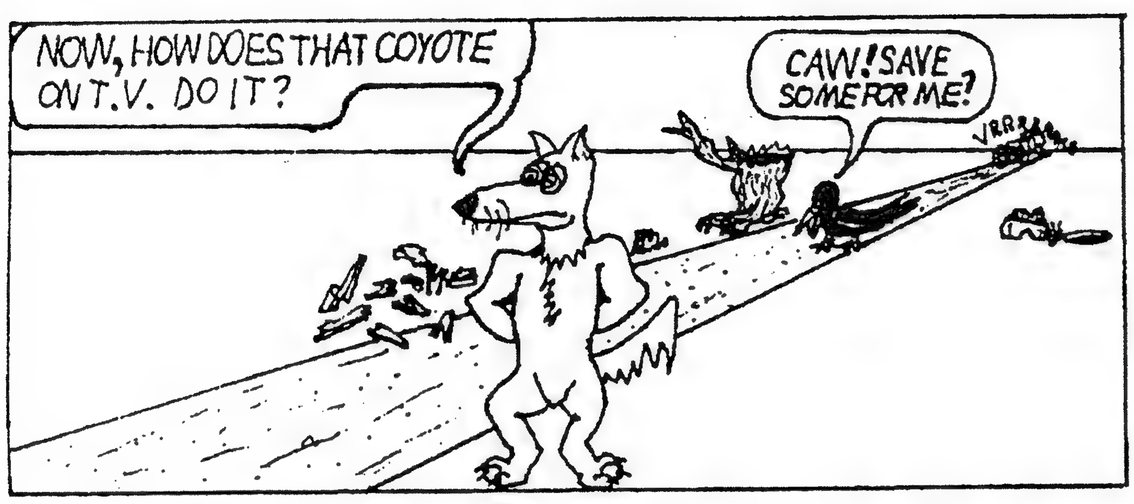


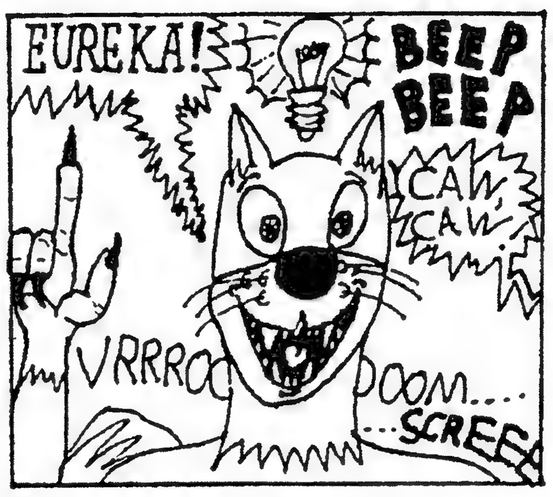




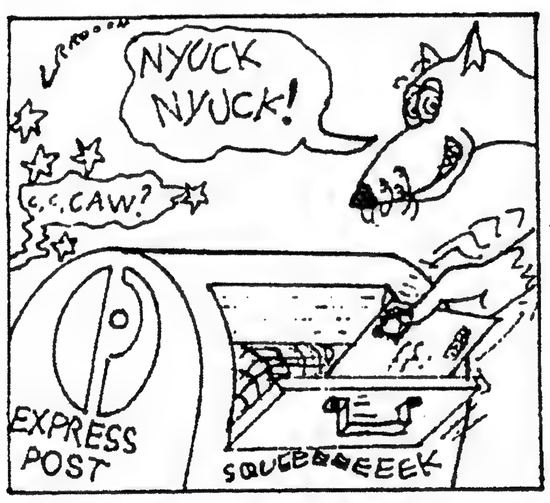


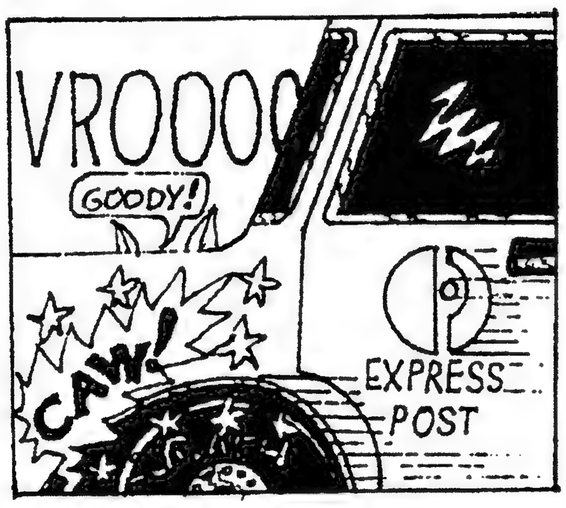


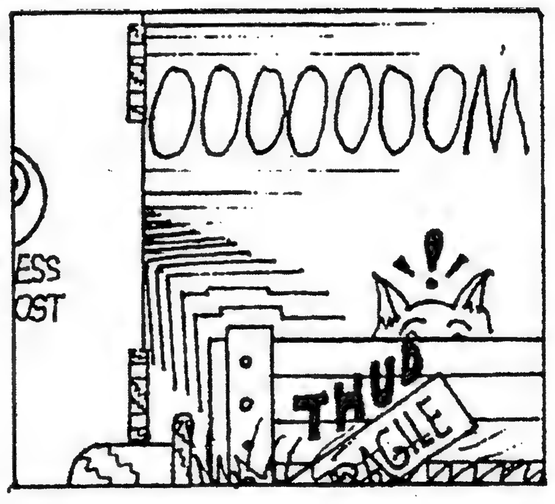


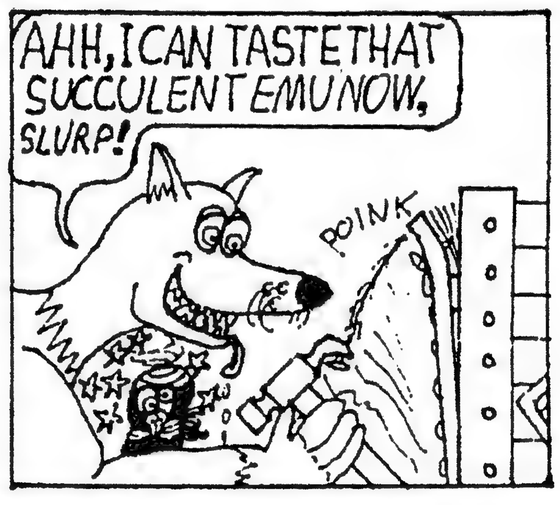












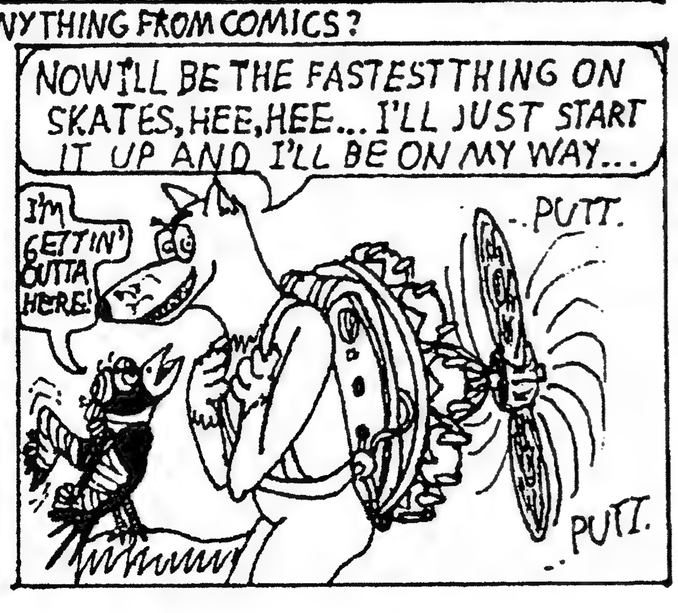


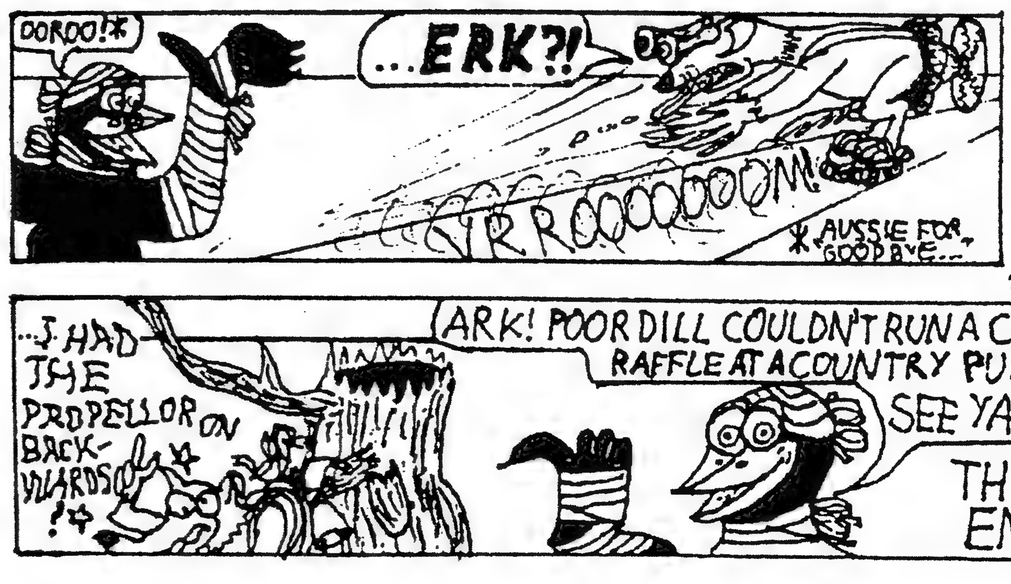




*YWHO SAYS YOU CAN'T LEARN ANYTHING FROM COMICS?








▲ THE U.S. KITTENS PONDER YET
"DIGITIGRADE"?
GET THE HELL
OUTTA HERE!
I DON'T
MY GOD—IS THAT-CAN IT
BE-AN-AMERICAN AMELOPE?
CAN RADIATION REALLY
DO THAT?
IT LOOKS
LIKE IT'S
IN PAIN-
-AND
DROOLING
IT.

ANOTHER MYSTERY OF LANGUAGE!

L OUT OF DODGE CRYIN' CAT'N
THAT WALKS ON IT'S TOES NOT
GROUND WITH HEELS - 'GLAD
WEAR HIGH HEELS -

D HAVE TO
SE THAT
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ORD ALLA
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IF

JESUS CHRIST-
IT AIN'T POSSIBLE-
<DIGITIGRADE?"

MOUTHIN' OFF, eh?
~~DOGS~~ ANIMALS
WILL DIE FOR THIS!

ASTOUNDING
ALTERNATE
WORLD
IDENTITY
REVEALED!

FOR
LAMO!

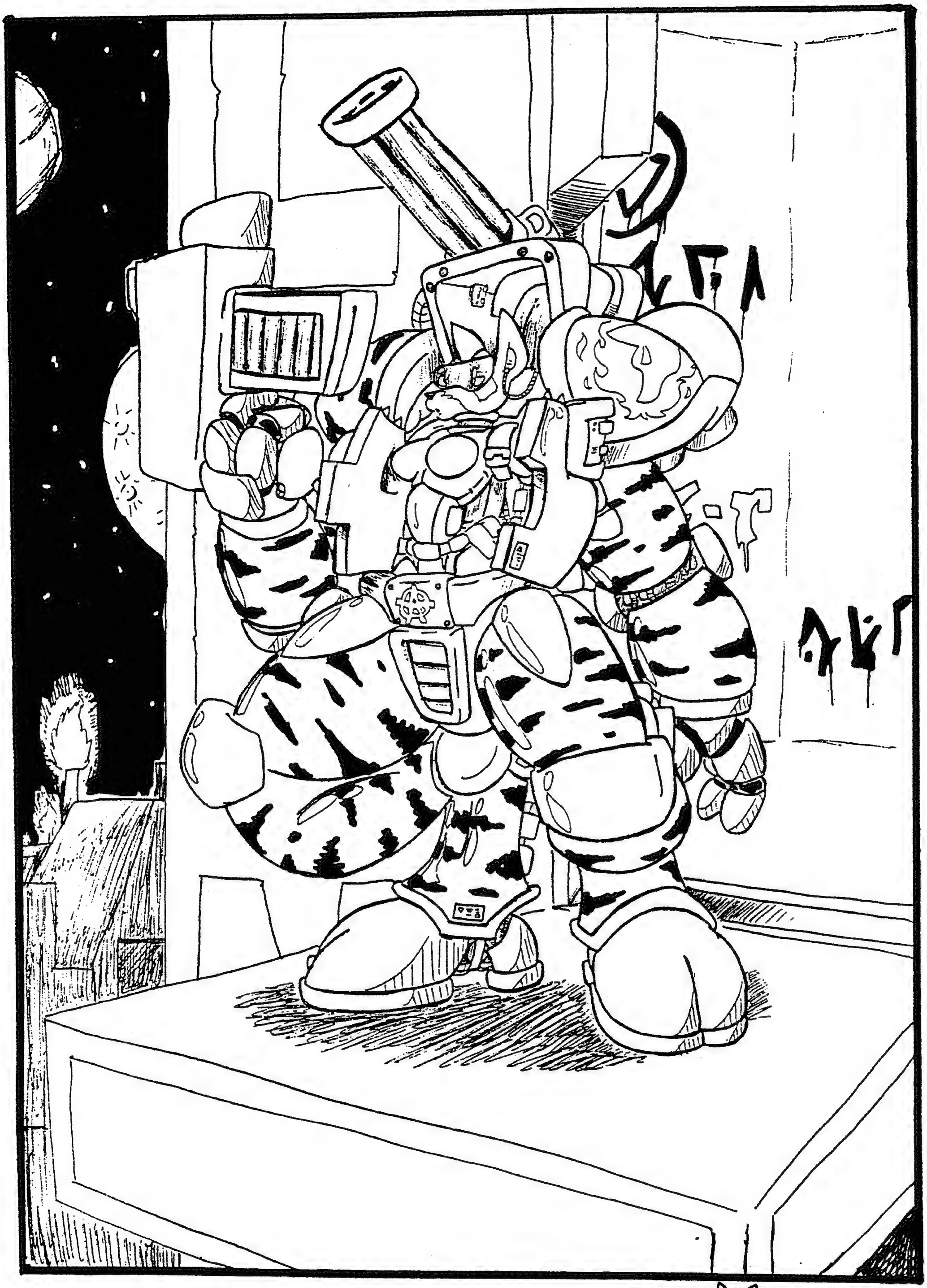
GHAstings '96


-A.PRO'95-
©



Amy Pronovost

I did this picture as part of a forthcoming portfolio and it is my favourite piece in it. It was not inspired by a story or anything, but it may end up inspiring one.



VENISAAN HEAVY POWER ARMOUR: BLAZING FAWN CHAPTER **David Buttenshaw**

This is another heavy mecha design for an alternative universe. The picture is shown with the canopy open to illustrate how the pilot would get into and out of the armour.

FINGAL STREET TIMBAWOLVES **David Buttenshaw**

Originally started as an experiment in muscle toning, it developed into a street fighter type super hero character. Indeed, it is based on the werewolf character from the **Dark Stalker** arcade game.



FINGAL STREET
TIMBAWOLVES

©1995-
David
Buttershaw

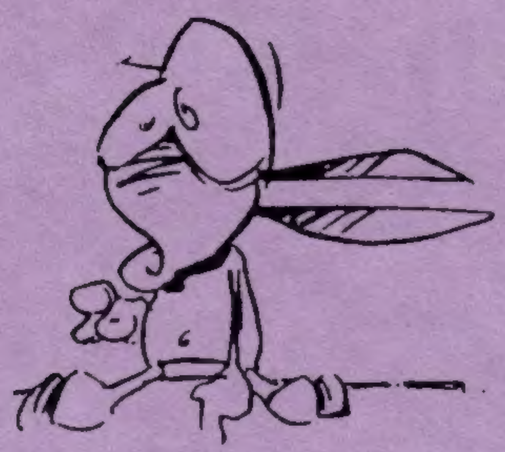


THE GOAT-FOOT ART GOD

Nick Stathopoulos

Craig Hilton Feb 96

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Hairbutt the Hippo is about a fat bastard of a hippopotamus (stay with me, here) who works as a private eye. He spends most of his time sleazing and doing the sort of things you see to your right. No, wait; it really is funny! Even David Stratton and Margaret Pomeranz have said nice things about it. This gem by Jason Paulos and Bodine Amerikah has been around for a long time and they are currently in the middle of a six issue mini series called "Crime Files", but don't despair, complete back issues are still available, most for about $4 including postage. Just write to:

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Now please bear with us as we shamelessly cut and paste from issue 4:

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"Boon" Craig Helton '96